

Mahoning County
Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program

(Revised) May 25, 2006

The Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program (PRC) is designed to provide benefits and services to low-income families to help with essential supports needed to move out of poverty and become self-sufficient. These supports include nonrecurring, short-term, crisis-oriented benefits and ongoing services that are directly related to the four objectives of the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program which do not meet the Federal definition of assistance. Nonrecurring, short-term assistance addresses discrete crisis situations, not to exceed four months in duration.

Assistance Group Composition

PRC benefits and services are available to a family assistance group (AG) which includes a minor (under the age of 18) child living with a parent or caretaker relative or pregnant individual as defined in Sections 5108.01 and 5108.06 of the Ohio Revised Code. Some PRC benefits and services are available to the no custodial parent of a minor child receiving or eligible for but not receiving assistance, who lives in the county but does not live in the same household as the minor child.

Eligibility

Eligibility for PRC is contingent upon the ag's demonstration and verification of need for financial assistance and/or services and whether or not the county determines that provision of PRC will satisfy that need. In order for eligibility to be determined, the income of the AG must be compared to the economic need standard established for the benefits and services requested. The economic need standards are based upon the federal poverty guideline measures which shall be updated annually when the federal guidelines are released. When determining eligibility for the PRC AG to receive benefits or services, the ag's gross income must be equal to or less than the economic need standard.

Income

Total gross income to all members of the ag's, including that which is normally exempt or disregarded when determining eligibility for Ohio Works First (OWF) or Disability Assistance (DA). All income which is received and/or expected to be received during the thirty (30) day budget period is considered when determining financial need. The 30-day budget period begins 30 days projected from the date of the PRC application unless this period of time does not accurately reflect expected income. In this instance, income received 30 days prior to the date of application may be utilized. Contracted agencies have the option of using self-declaration to verify income.

Resources

Liquid resources in excess of \$2000 available to the household may be considered when determining financial need.

Residence

Services or benefits will be available only to those residing in Mahoning County. Residence will be established by living in the county voluntarily with the intent to remain permanently or for an indefinite period of time. Residence is also established by an applicant who is not receiving assistance in another state or county and who has entered the county with a job commitment, whether or not currently employed.

Ineligible Family AG's

Federal and State law must be adhered to when providing PRC benefits and services. Listed below are federal and state prohibitions based on 42 U.S.C.608 section 431 of PRWORA (as amended by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1995 and Balanced Budget Act of 1997)k, and Ohio Revised Code:

1. No assistance for families without a minor child.
2. No assistance to a single individual, unless such individual is pregnant.
3. No medical services except for family planning services.
4. No benefits or services to an individual who is not a citizen of the United States or a qualified alien.
5. No assistance for families that fraudulently receive assistance under the OWF and PRC programs until repayment occurs.

In addition, assistance groups will not be eligible in the following situations:

1. No assistance for fugitive felons or those in violation of parole
2. No assistance unless the head of household has a high school diploma or equivalent or is enrolled and actively pursuing such.
3. No assistance to families where the head of household has failed to pursue paternity and child support or who are not actively pursuing paternity and child support, as applicable.
4. No assistance to families where the minor children are not attending school or the equivalent (for example: home schooling)
5. No assistance to families that fraudulently received assistance under any other program administered by the agency until repayment in full occurs.
6. No assistance to families who have an outstanding overpayment resulting from an administrative error or an inadvertent household error until a repayment agreement is signed by the party responsible for reimbursement.

Frequency

A family may be eligible for several services or benefits over time. The agency will have the final decision as to whether further benefits or services are appropriate for the PRC AG. When an individual has received benefits or services in another PRC AG, the agency shall determine whether further benefits or services are appropriate.

Program Integrity

The PRC AG will be given a choice of providers/vendors when appropriate and convenient. Under no circumstances will an employee of the Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services be an approved vendor. A PRC AG that is discovered to have fraudulently received or improperly disposed of PRC benefits or services will be required to reimburse the Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services the full cost of the benefits or service and may be subject to possible prosecution. Providing false and/or misleading information on the application will render the household ineligible for any PRC for a twenty-four-month period.

Program Operation

To ensure fair and equitable treatment of families applying for PRC, the program shall be continuously in operation according to the standards of policy and procedure as set forth within this document. The covered benefits or services or the amounts specified for the benefits and services listed in the section detailing the scope of coverage may not be reduced, limited or restricted unless the program is amended.

Scope of Benefits/Services

The attached chart contains the scope of benefits and services provided under the PRC program in Mahoning County. The chart also contains the assistance groups served, the economic need standards for the particular benefit/service, caps on the benefits/services, and the targeted groups. The targeted groups are used to customize service delivery specific to the family's circumstances.

Standard of Promptness

The focus of this program is to provide and authorize benefits and services within ten (10) days of receipt of a signed application. In some instances, this time frame will not be met due to unavoidable delays on the part of the applicant or the agency.

The ten-day standard of promptness is intended to stress the importance of processing the PRC applications in an appropriately efficient manner. The denial of a PRC application due only to

the expiration of the ten-day period is not an acceptable eligibility determination practice. The AG record should contain sufficient documentation of the case activity on the PRC application, including an explanation of unexpected or unavoidable delays in processing the application.

Community Resources

Every effort must be made to explore the availability of resources within the local community prior to the authorization of PRC. For the purposes of PRC, the 'community' may be defined to include areas beyond the county's boundaries. The PRC AG is required to apply for and utilize any program, benefit, or support system which may reduce or eliminate the presenting need. County staff determining eligibility for PRC must be aware of any community resources which could assist a family in need of immediate services. The PRC application provides a section for written documentation of attempts to locate and utilize community resources

Applicant Responsibility

An applicant for PRC is responsible for completing all necessary documents, furnishing all available facts and information, and cooperating in the eligibility determination process. An applicant must utilize available income and resources in meeting the presenting need. This includes ongoing assistance programs such as OWF, DA, SSI, and food stamps, as well as unemployment compensation, social security, and the special energy programs. There is no PRC eligibility if the AG fails to make use of available income or resources that are in an amount sufficient to meet a portion of, or the entire amount of the presenting need.

Application

The MCDJFS 3800 'Prevention, Retention, and Contingency Program (PRC) for Mahoning County' is to be used when a family is applying for PRC benefits and services. The application and any other information gathered during the eligibility determination process shall be kept in the ongoing OWF, Medicaid, and/or Food Stamp AG records. If the AG is not in receipt of ongoing assistance, a separate folder should be maintained for the PRC application and related verifications. PRC benefits and services provided to noncustodial parents shall also be kept in a separate AG record.

Eligibility factors, time restraints, and amounts available to pay for the various benefits and services covered must be explained. Anyone applying for PRC services must receive appropriate information about, referrals to, and access to Medicaid, food stamps, child care assistance and other programs that provide benefits that could help make the transition to work successful. Voter registration as prescribed by the secretary of state should also be available to applicants for PRC. Reference section 329.051 of the ORC.

PRC assistance will be authorized with the expectation that the PRC AG will be able to function without additional or with limited agency help. Services and benefits shall be provided which directly lead to or can be expected to lead the family to becoming self-sufficient by accomplishing one of the four purposes of TANF:

- a. Providing assistance to needy families;
- b. Ending the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
- c. Preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
- d. Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Notice of Approval/Denial

If it is determined that an application for PRC is approved, the ODHS 4074, "Notice of Approval of Your Application for Assistance" shall be mailed or otherwise delivered. If it is determined that an application for PRC is denied, the ODHS 7334, "Notice of Denial of Your Application for Assistance" shall be mailed or otherwise delivered.

Once eligibility for PRC is established, authorization shall occur and a payment for the benefits or services will be generated. Authorization may occur at any time during a period beginning on the date that PRC is approved. As long as payment is authorized within 30 days, actual payment may be made to vendor or PRC AG. Policy has been written to ensure that all auditing requirements are maintained.

Client Registry Information System - Enhanced (CRISE) computer system shall be utilized to track services received from county to county through the statewide clearance process. The CRISE application entry process (ARAD) shall be used to register the assistance group and PRC driver - formerly emergency assistance (AEOEA) will record the manual issuance of benefits and services. PRC services provided from Family and Children's First, Early Start and the School Readiness programs may be tracked and recorded through the ODJFS 2827, Monthly Financial Statement.

Service or Benefit	Cap	Assistance Group	Economic Need Standard	Target Group
<u>Job Readiness Training</u> Short-term training, not to exceed eighteen (18) months Short-term education expenses, as deemed appropriate to achieve self-sufficiency	Not to exceed \$3000 per 12 month period And only if not eligible through Mahoning Columbiana Training Association Training is limited to once lifetime	Parents with minor children Caretaker relatives with minor children Non-custodial parents	200% of Federal Poverty Level	Individuals who are employed, underemployed, or unemployed but employable School diploma Or GED
<u>Job Preparation Services and Benefits</u> Job readiness assessments Pre-employment drug testing Pre-employment background check Testing for state licenses, board certification, commercial drivers license Supplies for new job(Tools, Uniforms) Assistance with the removal of employment barriers - criminal records, financial difficulties, etc.	Not to exceed \$2500 per 12 month period within category - lifetime This is under Separate contract.	Parents with minor children Caretaker relatives with minor children Non-custodial parents	200% of Federal Poverty Level	Individuals who are employed, underemployed, or unemployed Community Legal Aid Services
<u>Work Support/Retention Services and</u>	Limited to once	Parents and Caretaker	200% of FPL -	

Service or Benefit	Cap	Assistance Group	Economic Need Standard	Target Group
<u>Benefits</u> Job Retention Bonus of \$750 after nine (9) months of continuous employment for those who have received cash assistance through OWF during the previous twelve (12) month period. Through OWF during the previous twelve (12) month period.	Lifetime	relatives with minor Children	earnings must equal or exceed 150% of FPL, and the applicant must be working at least 150 hours per month for the nine (9) month period with confirmed good performance	Employed individuals
<u>Individual Development Account</u> as defined by law for: 1. Post secondary education 2. Purchase of a home 3. Fund the establishment of a business	Match family's accumulation up to \$2000 – once lifetime	Parents and caretaker relatives with minor children Non-custodial parents	150% FPL	Employed individuals
<u>Diversion Benefits</u> Awareness activities provided by the Mahoning County Department of Job and Family Services or through contracted services that will increase the participation of low income families, such as pamphlets and informational meetings, mailings to human resource personnel informing of available programs, publicity for job activities (job fair, etc.) Up to the equivalent of four (4) months	No cap on services (as needed) Using the money	Parents and caretaker relatives with minor children	ODHS 100% standard of need	Under employed and unemployed individuals displaced workers, and job ready unemployed parents or caretaker relatives of minor children who are

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cash payments to assist with basic needs such as rent, utilities, and incidentals (Must also apply for food stamps, Medicaid, child care, attend money management counseling, and be actively involved in a job readiness activity) To prevent the need for on-going TANF cash payments	management budget, taking into consideration essential budget items, up to four (4) times the OWF payment standard for the appropriate assistance group size (once in a lifetime)			temporarily unemployed and actively involved in job readiness activity or job search
<u>Contingency Services</u> Rent / Mortgage Utilities Essential Household items/appliances (Bed, washer, dryer, refrigerator, stove)	Actual amount needed to prevent disconnection up to \$500 <u>or</u> eviction up to \$500 (once every twenty-four months) Repair, unless repair is not cost effective, then cost of item or appliance, up to \$750, repair up to \$250 (purchase once every ten (10) years, repair once every two (2) years)	Families with minor children	150% FPL Family must have sufficient income to maintain prevention status	Families at risk of losing current or potential employment through no fault of their own. Must show a regular (IE: weekly or monthly) payment history over the previous twelve (12) months. Must have at least six (6) months of employment with in the previous twelve (12) months.

Service or Benefit	Cap	Assistance Group	Economic Need Standard	Target Group
<u>Transportation Services and Benefits</u> Driver's Education classes Licensing fees and Reinstatement fees Car Repairs (performed by a licensed/certified shop that adheres to industry standards)	Not to exceed \$750 (once lifetime) For non-cosmetic mechanical car repairs, lowest of three estimates from licensed/certified shops, not to exceed \$1500 (not to exceed \$3000 lifetime) Repair cannot exceed the NADA loan value	Parents and care-taker relatives with minor children and Non- custodial parents	200% of FPL	Employed parents or care- taker relatives of minor children and Employed Non-custodial parents
<u>Relocation Assistance</u> to allow relocation outside of Mahoning County	Actual cost, up to \$2000 (once lifetime)	Families with minor children	200% FPL	Individuals with secured employment or victims of domestic violence
<u>Case Management Services</u> to Parents or Care-taker Relatives in Sanctioned Cases to Eliminate barriers to Compliance	Not to exceed \$1500 (once lifetime)	Parents or care-taker relatives of minor children who have been sanctioned	150% FPL	Families with children at risk of abuse or neglect, where the head of household is working toward

Service or Benefit	Cap	Assistance Group	Economic Need Standard	Target Group
<u>Help Me Grow</u> Mahoning County Family and Children First Council. An umbrella of services for pregnant women and families with children from birth to three years of age.	No cap on services (as needed)	Families with minor children	300% of FPL	Pregnant women and families with children under three (3) years of age
<u>Kinship Navigator</u> Information and referral services concerning: Legal Services, Child Care, Respite Care, Training, and Financial Assistance	Information and referral as needed	Caretaker relatives with minor children living in their households or who are likely to have minor children placed with them.	200% FPL	Kinship Care givers
<u>Access to Better Care (ABC) non-behavioral services</u> Case management Youth advocate services In-home environmental assessments Supervision/monitoring Respite	No cap on services (as needed)	Parents with minor Children Specified relatives With minor child(ren)	200% FPL	Multi-need youth Through age 18